

# Microplastic Taxis for Microbes

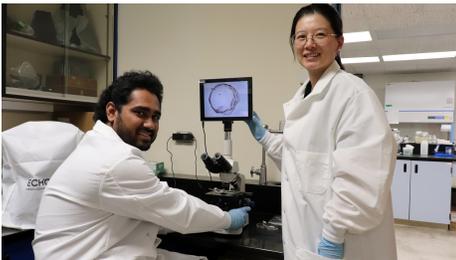
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## Microplastic Taxis for Microbes

### Environmental Engineers Akib Al Mahir and Liyuan (Joanna) Hou

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### Date

FRIDAY, February 20, 2026

7 p.m. [Eccles Science Learning Center](#)

Emert Auditorium, Room ESLC 130

Hands-on learning activities, along with refreshments, follow the talk in the Eccles Science Learning Center atrium.

Admission is free and all ages are welcome.

[Directions and Parking Information](#)

### Talk Description

Plastics are everywhere in our modern world, providing convenience for packaging, clothing, furnishings, infrastructure and the many consumer products that make our lives easier. But plastic waste, which breaks down into small particles, is making its way into our air, soils, water, food – and into our bodies – all of which can harm our health and environment.

Utah State University environmental engineers Akib Al Mahir and Joanna (Liyuan) Hou are studying how microplastics interact with varied microbes in wastewater. Some of these microbes are beneficial and can break down microplastics. Others are harmful to humans and the environment. Akib and Joanna are exploring how microplastics behave like “tiny Uber drivers” that can transport microbes in ways that are helpful and not helpful.